

WASATCH FRONT

By Janine S. Creager

Business at the Crossroads

With so many prime locations to choose from throughout the United States, why would any company want to set up shop along Utah's Wasatch Front? That's the question that Jeff Edwards, president and CEO of the Economic Development Corporation of Utah (EDCUTAH), has explored and researched. And he knows just the answer.

"We work with national site consultants looking in multiple states" he says. "The three reasons companies come to Utah are: first, the excellence of the workforce and labor; second, the state's geographic location; and third, the quality of life that is found here." Along the Wasatch Front, and in the counties of Salt Lake, Tooele, Davis, Weber and Morgan, companies will find the human and temporal resources necessary to meet their requirements now and in the future.

WORKFORCE AT ITS BEST

"Labor is far and away the number one issue," explains Edwards. "If a company is looking to build a new facility or an expansion, the biggest investment it will make is in labor."

In the pursuit of finding the best place to establish or expand a business, companies need to know: What kind of workers are available in my industry and at what cost? Less tangible questions revolve around the quality of those workers: What is it like to hire people in Utah? Will they stay; are they loyal?

To all of these questions, Edwards responds, "The answers along the Wasatch front are favorable." Many states experience negative labor growth, he explains, but not Utah.

"Utah rates high as an educated and very young workforce," says Shawn Stinson, public relations manager for EDCUTAH. According to Forbes.com, the Salt Lake area ranked second in the nation for the best education in big cities, second in the nation for per capita spending on education, and fourth in the nation for the percentage of students completing high school.

FAST FACTS:

Counties: Salt Lake, Davis, Tooele, Weber, Morgan

Major Cities: Tooele (27,903), Ogden (78,293), Roy (35,308), Layton (66,310), Bountiful (42,700), Salt Lake (182,420), West Valley (115,237), Sandy (90,979)

Regional Civilian Labor Force: 762,411

Per Capita Income: \$23,239 (Salt Lake), \$20,664 (Tooele), \$22,601 (Weber), \$21,902 (Morgan), \$22,929 (Davis)

Major Employers: University of Utah, Intermountain Healthcare, Convergys, Dugway Proving Grounds, Teleperformance USA, AG and G Defense Materials, Weber State University, McKay Dee Hospital Center, Holnam Inc., Hill Air Force Base, Lifetime Products Inc., Smith's Food and Drug Stores

Average Sale Price of Homes, Third Quarter 2004:

Salt Lake \$228,653, Tooele \$145,676, Davis \$199,948, Weber 153,321



In the area of higher education, the Wasatch Front is home to two major universities—the University of Utah in Salt Lake County and Weber State University in Weber County—which contribute a wealth of knowledge and experience to the community. In addition to these major universities, the Wasatch Front also boasts several community and technical schools including the Salt Lake Community College and LDS Business College in Salt Lake County, and two applied technology colleges: one in Weber County and a second in Davis County.

In addition, Hill Air Force base, located on federally-owned land bordering Weber and Davis Counties, employs more than 23,000 people, including 13,000 civilians and almost 4,000 contractors. Hill is a prime example of the successful aerospace industry in Utah. These workers reside throughout the Wasatch Front, with many in nearby Morgan County, and are representative of the highly technical skills available throughout the area.

A strong educational and tech-

nical backbone combined with the nation's highest rate of adult volunteerism (Point of Light National Volunteer Center Network, 2004) make Wasatch Front workers prepared and committed to contributing toward the economic future of businesses across the state and the nation.

"There are benefits looking down the road," says Stinson. "Here along the Wasatch Front, we are replenishing our own workforce. Companies can be assured there will be a steady availability of employees years from now."

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

As in real estate, the geographic location of a business' headquarters or satellite office is of prime importance. "The Internet is great for business," says Edwards, "but it still matters where you are." With ever-increasing fuel costs, getting goods from the manufacture to the distributor and ultimately to the consumer can take a huge chunk out of the bottom line. That's where the Wasatch Front's well-deserved moniker comes into play.

"With interstate highways, rail lines and an international airport, the Wasatch Front really is the 'Crossroads of the West'," says Stinson. Being centrally located in the West is a significant financial asset. And while Denver is also centrally situated, shipping west across the Rocky Mountains from Colorado can prove to be very expensive. "Utah is a good place to bring goods in, and a good place to send goods from," says Edwards.

While these transportation advantages are a boon to Salt Lake City and Salt Lake County, they certainly are not limited to that area. Rail and interstate service through Morgan County, for example, offers easy access to Cheyenne, Wyoming and from there to all points east.

Tooele County to the west is a viable distributing alternative to businesses serving the Salt Lake valley where easy commuting and proximity to the airport make it an outstanding industrial area for manufacturing and distribution. And when it comes to workforce potential, the affordable home prices of Tooele County make it an ideal place from which to draw human resources.

"People living in Tooele County and commuting into Salt Lake would love to be able to stay in Tooele," says Edwards.

REST AND RELAXATION

When it comes to the health and well-being of employees, all work and no play can be stressful as well as costly. That's why the third factor in bringing business to the Wasatch Front centers on the benefits of recreation. Whether looking for spectator or

participatory sports, world-class cultural events or access to the natural surroundings from the mountains to the desert, you'll find it all along the Wasatch Front.

For fans of spectator sports, Salt Lake County is home to two professional teams: the NBA's Utah Jazz and Major League Soccer's Real Salt Lake. For those who prefer to get outdoors and work off stress, the mountain trails located just east of the capital city are ideal for a variety of activities through the entire year, including world-class skiing. And don't worry about having to take several days away from work to enjoy these activities. From walking to hiking and mountain biking, these trails are close and easily accessible from anywhere within the Salt Lake valley.

The success of the 2002 Winter Olympics alerted the world to the plethora of winter sports available in the area. Along with the well-known resorts like Alta and Snowbird, located in nearby Little Cottonwood canyon, an hour's drive north of the Salt Lake International Airport will offer three additional ski resorts in Weber County: Snowbasin, which was ranked as one of the nation's top 15 ski resorts in 2004 by Ski Magazine; Nordic Valley; and Powder Mountain.

"Ogden and Weber County are becoming big players in the ski industry," says Edwards. "The area is becoming a powerful recreational hub with plans for a gondola from the train depot in downtown Ogden to the campus of Weber State University, and a second line from the campus to the ski resort of Snowbasin."

Morgan County offers spectacular scenery, with the charm of a beau-



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tiful mountain valley within minutes of Ogden and the area ski resorts. And if it's fun in the sun that you're looking for, East Canyon reservoir in Morgan County and Pineview Reservoir in Weber County are summer playgrounds for water-skiing, boating and other water-related activities.

If recreational opportunities along the Wasatch Front were found only in the mountain regions, there would still be plenty of variety. But that's not all this area has to offer. From the pristine mountain resorts to the east, it's not far to the desert on the west and variety of fun it has to offer.

Tooele County offers several locations known for speed throughout history, from numerous Pony Express sites of the 1800s to the internationally famous Bonneville Salt Flats and Speedway. In Davis County, visitors need only travel across a seven-mile paved causeway, to reach the Great Salt Lake Antelope Island State Park, a 28,000-acre desert island paradise, home to antelope and bison, flocks of pelicans, spectacular sunsets and miles of biking trails.

From the beauty of nature to the heart of the arts, the Wasatch Front has myriad cultural opportunities including the Utah Symphony, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Utah Opera and Ballet West in Salt Lake County, and many semi-professional regional theater and musical troupes throughout every county in the area. Historical and art museums are also plentiful. Finally, for those wanting to search out their family roots, the Family History Library in Salt Lake City offers the world's largest collection of free family history and genealogical records.

"Culture is an important part of the equation for decision-makers," says Edwards. "People wonder, 'Am I going to be accepted in Utah? It is a place that is fun?' Here in Utah, I think we have a great story to tell."

When Utah's first governor Brigham Young entered the Salt Lake valley in 1847, he pronounced, "This is the right place." The people who live along the Wasatch Front in the 21st century couldn't agree more. According to national sources, the Salt Lake City/Ogden area not only has a cost of living consistently lower than the national average (ACCURA Cost of Living Index); the area was also named the ninth most fun place to live in the nation (Cranium Board Games, Money magazine, 2003).

So, no matter how you look at it, the Wasatch Front really is the place for qualified and committed workers, convenient transportation and distribution, and a wealth of cultural and recreational activities. Why live or do business anywhere else?

